



Lesbian Writers Series

Inaugurated on February 18, 1984, at A Different Light bookstore in Los Angeles, this trailblazing series featured an amazing range of lesbian writers

1984

was a groundbreaking year for Southern California. Mayor Tom Bradley brought the summer Games of the XXIII Olympiad to Los Angeles, the first time since 1932. In November, the newly incorporated City of West Hollywood appointed the world's first openly lesbian mayor Valerie Terrigno. A lesser known, but pivotal event also took place when L.A.'s first gay/lesbian bookstore, A Different Light Books in Silver Lake launched the first-ever writers series for lesbians – the Lesbian Writers Series – on Saturday evening February 18, 1984.

Indeed, Southern California was home to a number of women's bookstores—including Westwood's Sisterhood Bookstore near UCLA and Pasadena's Page One—that included lesbian authors. Regardless, most lesbian writers remained mute about their identities at public readings, even at the Woman's

Building in downtown Los Angeles.

A Different Light Books (named by co-owner Norman Laurila after a gay-themed science fiction novel) opened in October 1979 at 4014 Santa Monica Blvd at the Sunset Junction in Silver Lake and expanded to include stores in San Francisco, New York and West Hollywood that all thrived during the 80s and mid-90s. The flagship Silver Lake store closed in April 1992. All four former venues included robust and well-represented collections of lesbian fiction and non-fiction, expertly curated by store co-founder Richard Labonte.

Ann Bradley was the second lesbian to work at A Different Light Books, initially hired for the 1983 holiday season. She remained a store clerk through November 1985.

On Monday night January 16, 1984, writer Carolyn Weathers asked Bradley to join her for a reading of her memoir *Leaving*

OPPOSITE TOP LEFT: Friday, October 19, 1990, A Different Light Books celebrates the Lesbian Writers Series. From left to right: writer/producer and LSW coordinator Sophia Corleone, LWS founder Ann Bradley, writer Carolyn Weathers, former Los Angeles poet laureate Professor Eloise Klein Healy, LWS coordinator Gail Suber (kneeling). *Photo by Janice Porter-Moffitt.*

OPPOSITE TOP LEFT: February 24, 1989, at the Woman's Building on Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles, Carolyn Weathers (*left*) and Jenny Wrenn at the publication party for *In a Different Light: An Anthology of Lesbian Writers*, edited by Carolyn Weathers and Jenny Wrenn and published by their imprint Clothespin Fever Books in 1989.

OPPOSITE MIDDLE LEFT: Ann Bradley introduces the evening at the publication party for *In a Different Light*.

OPPOSITE MIDDLE RIGHT: Saturday, August 25, 1984, staff of A Different Light Books, 4014 Santa Monica Blvd, in Silver Lake area of Los Angeles. From left to right, manager John Ruggles, co-founder Richard Labonte, co-owner George Leigh, clerk Ann Bradley, clerk Larry, and unidentified woman. *Photo by Greysen Vega.*

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Carolyn Weathers speaks at publications party for *In A Different Light*.

The lesbian writers presented in In a Different Light: an Anthology of Lesbian Writers were from those who read their works at Ann Bradley's wildly popular and influential Lesbian Writers Series, which took place every Saturday evening at A Different Light Bookstore in Silver Lake.

The LWS was eclectic. Ann Bradley's only requirement was that the writer be an open lesbian. Beyond that, there were no strictures. All forms were fine. All opinions and tone were welcome—be they funny, sad, bittersweet, profound, or angry.

Jenny Wrenn and I took this same approach at Clothespin Fever Press. Just be an out lesbian, and you could write about death and loss or about the adventures of your spacedog Molly Moon touring the galaxy.

—Carolyn Weathers

Texas at Pam Roberts' Three Guineas Bookstore in Newport Beach, California. Bradley was a fan of Weathers since meeting the Texas native and her older sister Brenda—founder of L.A.'s Alcoholism Center for Women, the nation's first recovery facility to welcome lesbian alcoholics—on September 1, 1980. That September evening Carolyn cradled the manuscript of *Crazy*, her tragicomic autobiography detailing her manic depression, published by Clothespin Fever Press in 1989. Bradley later copied Weather's delightful story "Tracking Down Vivian" from a Novem-

ber 1983 issue of the *LA Reader* and sent it with her holiday cards.

The fierce rain that January evening limited Weathers' audience to about eight intrepid souls who were so captivated by her story-telling that they begged her to read the entire twenty-five-page plus memoir of vignettes on growing up in a small Texas town with her adored older sister. Driving home, Bradley told her that she felt compelled to create a wider showcase for Weathers' literary luminescence. The next morning, Bradley asked store manager Ruggles, co-founder Labonte, and

owner Laurila whether she could launch the Lesbian Writers Series with Weathers and hold subsequent monthly readings on the third Saturday night of the month. Literary history began.

The Lesbian Writers Series debuted with Carolyn Weathers on Saturday, February 18, 1984, at A Different Light. Bradley was helped by numerous individuals including literary mavens Eloise Klein Healy—who would go on to become L.A.'s first poet laureate appointed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in December of 2012—and longtime Woman's Building executive director, writing teacher and poet/playwright/author Terry Wolverton.

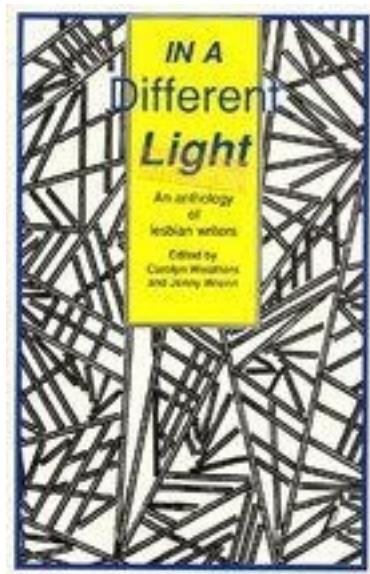
In an April 1990 interview for *L.A. Magazine* Bradley remembered, "I started the series because I had been a supporter of women writers and I was aware as a lesbian that we'd been silenced." She had one rule: writers appearing on the Lesbian Writers Series would be listed on fliers, news releases, and promotional material. No closets. Labonte, a former Toronto Star reporter and gay/lesbian literary aficionado greatly assisted Bradley in the first year of the Lesbian Writers Series. Initially, the Los Angeles Times Book Calendar listed the Series as the "Women's Writers Series," until Labonte called and graciously insisted on the correct title for future listings.

As a publicist at Cal State L.A., Bradley also had the exceptional backing of California State University Los Angeles Public Affairs director and former Santa Monica

Mayor Ruth Goldway who generously supported Joan Nestle's January 1989 appearance and the CSULA-sponsored March 30, 1989, appearance by acclaimed African American lesbian poets Cheryl Clarke and Pat Parker for Women's History Month. Parker's reading at A Different Light with Clarke on Friday, March 31, 1989 would be her last public appearance before her sudden and untimely death from cancer the following June.

Bradley produced the series from 1984 through the end of 1990. She introduced series writers for the first six years and then Gail Suber introduced the writers for the 1990 season and coordinated the 1991 lineup. Suber collaborated with Sophia Corleone on the 1992 season and assisted with later years. When the Silver Lake store closed in April 1992, Suber moved the Series to the West Hollywood store, also on Santa Monica Blvd. Writer/producer Sophia Corleone, who first read publicly on the series in 1988, became series coordinator in 1993 and would later incorporate the series as a stand-alone event, designating the series as a 501(c)3 and establishing a Lesbian Writers Series mentorship program. When the series took place at Plummer Park and other locations, Corleone worked with photographer Janice Porter-Moffitt who brought a book trolley to supply copies for author signings.

Carolyn Weathers and then-partner Jenny Wrenn launched Clothespin Fever Press, which was dedicated to lesbian authors, in



..... To acknowledge a lesbian culture has too often been met with disdain, distrust, and disbelief as the quoted library catalog cards have manifested when they repeatedly used the words "so-called" for conceptions about lesbians being anything

but sexual deviants....The Lesbian Writers Series has given voice to the multifaceted lesbian community....Several great women writers are just beginning to appear in literature anthologies used in universities. Interestingly, the first Book of the Month selection, Lolly Widdowes, a very well-received book in 1926, was by Sylvia Townsend Warner, a lesbian. The work, forgotten by the dominant culture today, has been reissued and is known to those who keep this hidden culture alive....Instead of maintaining our culture through public libraries, civic arenas or galleries, lesbians have gravitated toward private centers, initially bar rooms, small community centers, and private homes, finally bookstores.

—Jenny Wrenn, Introduction,

In a Different Light: An Anthology of Lesbian Writers

LESBIAN WRITERS SERIES 1989

JANUARY 21



JOAN NESTLE
CO-SPONSORED BY UCLA'S
WOMEN STUDIES DEPARTMENT & THE
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN

FEBRUARY 18



SUSIE BRIGHT

MARCH 18



KITTY TSUI



WILLYCE KIM

APRIL 15



DOROTHY ALLISON



ROBIN PODOLSKY

MYRA FOURWINDS



MICHELLE CLIFF

MYRA FOURWINDS



AYOFEMIE STOWE

MAY 20



CAROLYN WEATHERS



GEORGIA COTRELL

JUNE 17



JENNY WREN

KAY MC FALL

JULY 15



ALEIDA RODRIGUEZ



JESSIE LATTIMORE

BIA LOWE

AUGUST 19



TERRY WOLVERTON

BIA LOWE



BIA LOWE

TERRY WOLVERTON



CHERRIE MORAGA



ANA CASTILLO

BERND BOHNER

OCTOBER 21



KATHERINE FORREST

JOE DOHERTY



ELOISE KLEIN HEALY

MARY MARTHUR



SHARON STRICKER

NOVEMBER 18



MARIE-CLAIRES BLAIS
CO-SPONSORED BY THE LOS ANGELES
QUEBEC GOVERNMENT OFFICE

NORMAND VAUGHAN



ANN BRADLEY

DECEMBER 16



ORGANIZER

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE

4014 SANTA MONICA BLVD.
LOS ANGELES, CA 90029
(213) 668-0629

ALL READINGS ARE ON THE
THIRD SATURDAY OF THE
MONTH AT 8 P.M.

1986. In its 10 years, the imprint published twenty-three books. On February 24, 1989, Clothespin celebrated the publication of a volume featuring the first five years of the Lesbian Writers Series, *In a Different Light: An Anthology of Lesbian Writers*, at a party at the Woman's Building. Bradley contributed the preface to the book and introduced the evening as the "best prom we've never been to!"

Sophia Corleone with assistance from Gail Suber expanded the reach of the series, featuring such preeminent authors as June Jordan, Cherrie Moraga, Joan Larkin, and Angela Davis and bringing Joan Nestle back for two more appearances, which included the last Southern California public reading of the Lesbian Writers Series on Saturday, November 14, 1998, at Plummer Park in West Hollywood. Nestle had made her Southern California debut in January of 1989 during a week of events scheduled by Bradley with the assistance of Suber and Corleone, including readings at UC Irvine on January 18, at the UCLA Center for the Study of Women on January 19, at CSULA on January 20, and in the Lesbian Writers Series at A Different Light Books on Saturday, January 21, 1989.

At Bradley's suggestion, the UCLA Women's Studies Program and UCLA Center for the Study of Women cosponsored Nestle's 1989 visit with additional funding from CSULA librarian Morris Polan. Mary Margaret Smith of the Women's Studies Program produced a 1988-89 series of readings

by lesbian historians and writers after UCLA students founded the nation's first lesbian sorority Lambda Delta Lambda in February of 1988 (http://articles.latimes.com/1988-02-24/local/me-11690_1_lambda-delta-lambda-sorority). yet

were largely unaware of their city's lesbian history. Smith agreed to include Nestle among those legendary voices in a series that included Audre Lorde.

In 1974 Joan Nestle co-founded the nation's first lesbian archives, the Lesbian Herstory Archives with her then-partner Deborah Edel. Housed for many years in Nestle's Manhattan apartment, the Archives moved to its permanent Park Slope building in Brooklyn in June 1992. (<http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/>) Nestle's 1989 week-long Southern California appearances helped raise funds for the Park Slope building including more than \$800 collected from at the UCLA/CSW event in January 1989.

In 1987, while on the board of L.A.'s gay/lesbian Celebration Theatre, Bradley created and launched the Lesbian Writers Series II to showcase the talents of lesbian playwrights, film makers and performance artists. The year showcased the talents of Robin Podolsky, Jere Van Syoc and film maker Martha Wheelock among others.

On Friday, October 19, 1990, A Different Light Books manager Jim Morrow celebrated the 11th anniversary of the bookstore at an event thanking Bradley for founding the Lesbian Writers Series. Bradley invited Carolyn Weathers,

Eloise Klein Healy, and Sophia Corleone to read on a program that also celebrated the numerous individuals who had attended the series since its inception, including June Mazer Archives board member Angela Brinskele.

A letter to Bradley from United States Representative Henry Waxman said in part, "It is vital for every literate American to be aware of the monumental literary contributions made by lesbian writers throughout history. It is also imperative to appreciate the barriers they have overcome."

On Sunday, March 28, 2004, ONE Archives director Stuart Timmons, also a former clerk at A Different Light, celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Lesbian Writers Series and Clothespin Fever Press. Covering the event, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote in part, "Ann Bradley was working as a clerk at the gay and lesbian bookstore A Different Light when she founded the series in 1984. At the time she was frustrated by the fact that women writers reading their works would not acknowledge their homosexuality...."

Also in the March 29, 2004, *Los Angeles Times* feature, LWS coordinator Sophia Corleone noted "For many years the Lesbian Writers Series was absolutely the only place where lesbian-themed authors could safely share their work. In many ways, this is still true."

Ann Bradley, founder and coordinator of the Lesbian Writers Series from 1984 to 1990, compiled this history. For information, she can be reached at ann.bradley@sbcglobal.net.

Speakers in Lesbian Writers Series, 1984 to 1990

Ann Bradley, Founding Coordinator	October 19	Peggy Collen, Carol Schmidt	1988	January 16	Jacqueline DeAngelis, Elizabeth Nonas	1990	January 20	Terry de la Pena, Carolyn Weathers
A Different Light Books 4014 Santa Monica Blvd. Silver Lake, Los Angeles, CA	November 16	Katherine Forrest, Elizabeth Nonas			Gloria Ramos		February 17	Ashley Black,
	December 21	Winter Solstice Celebration	February 20		Chaney Holland, Robin Podolsky			
			March 19	Judith McDaniel, Ayofemie Stowe Folayan				Lynette Prucha,
1984	1986		April 16	Alice Bloch, Eloise Klein Healy		February 22	Sharon Sumpter	
February 18 Carolyn Weathers	January 18 Marcella Aguilar, Judy Best		May 21	Marilynn Cruz, Eileen Pagan		March 17	Sarah Schulman Willyce Kim, Kitty Tsui	
March 19 Alice Bloch	February 15 Katherine Forrest		June 18	Marylyn Donohue, Louise Moore		April 20	Susie Bright (Cancelled)	
April 21 Jacqueline DeAngelis, Aleida Rodriguez, Terry Wolverton, Bia Lowe	March 15 Paula Gunn Allen		July 16	Carolyn Weathers, Jenny Wrenn		April 21	Teresita Bosch, Karen Sterling, Terry Wolverton	
May 19 Robin Podolsky, Lynn McGee, Karen Dalyea	April 19 Judy Grahn Cheri Pies		August 20	Katherine Forrest		May 19	Ayofemie Stowe Folayan, Merle Woo	
June 19 Louise Moore, Pauline Moore	June 21 Pauline Moore		September 17	Peggy Collen, Patricia Murphy		June 15	Jeanne Cordova	
July 21 Stacey Sloan, Ruchele ZeOeh	July 19 Marylyn Donahue, Lynn McGee Marc Cugini, Claudia McMullen		October 15	Janice Lerma, Kris McHaddad, Karen Sterling, Savina Teubel		June 16	Patricia Murphy, Jeanne Simonoff, Sharon Stricker	
August 18 Eloise Klein Healy	September 20 Eloise Klein Healy		November 19	Sophia Corleone, Sharon Stricker		July 21	Robin Podolsky, Savina Teubel	
September 15 Marilyn Cruz, Eileen Pagan	October 18 Robin Podolsky, Carolyn Weathers		December 17	Elizabeth Nonas, Terry Wolverton		August 17	Carla Tomaso	
October 20 Katherine Forrest	November 15 Valerie Miner					August 18	Jacqueline de Angelis, Regina Meister, Karen Minns	
November 17 Chaney Holland, M'Lissa Mayo	December 20 Winter Solstice Celebration							
December 15 Winter Solstice Celebration								
1985	1987		1989					
January 19 Stacey Sloan, Carolyn Weathers	January 17 Brenda Weathers		January 21	Joan Nestle				
February 16 Bia Lowe, Terry Wolverton	February 21 Ann Bradley, Nancy Glenn		February 18	Susie Bright				
March 16 Alice Bloch	March 21 Katherine Forrest		March 18	Willyce Kim, Kitty Tsui		October 20	Sophia Corleone, Kris McHaddad, Rebecca Roberts	
April 20 Gay Male Poets: Peter Cashorali, Kenny Fries, Ron Carillo, Bernard Cooper	April 18 Maria Jose Delgado, May 16 Carolyn Weathers, Jenny Wrenn		March 31	Pat Parker and Cheryl Clarke		November 16	SDiane Bogus	
May 18 Eloise Klein Healy	June 20 Tamu, Elaine Hall		April 15	Dorothy Allison, Robin Podolsky		November 17	Dorothy Allison, Louise Moore, Mariah Richardson	
June 15 Dorothy Love, Synthia Saint James	July 18 Louise Moore, Robin Podolsky		May 20	Michelle Cliff, Ayofemie Stowe Folayan		December 15	Katherine Forrest, Eloise Klein Healy (held at ONE Archives in West Adams)	
July 20 Karen Minns, Louise Moore	September 12 Celebration of Jewish Women's Culture:		June 17	Georgia Cotrell, Carolyn Weathers				
August 17 Ann Erb, Grace Huerta, Robin Podolsky	August 15 Chaney Holland, Karen Minns		July 15	Aleida Rodriguez, Jessie Lattimore				
September 21 Savina Teubal, Jess Wells	September 12 Celebration of Jewish Women's Culture: Alice Bloch, Savina Teubel		August 19	Bia Lowe, Terry Wolverton				
	October 17 Peggy Collen, Marylyn Donohue		September	Cherrie Moraga, Ana Castillo (Cancelled)				
	November 21 Terry Wolverton		October 21	Katherine Forrest				
	December 19 Eloise Klein Healy		November 18	Eloise Klein Healy, Sharon Stricker				
			December 16	Marie Claire Blais (Cancelled)				

Speakers in Lesbian Writers Series, 1991 to 1994

1991	1992	1993	1994
Gail Suber, Coordinator A Different Light Books 4014 Santa Monica Blvd. Silver Lake, Los Angeles, CA	Gail Suber and Sophia Corleone, Co-Coordinators A Different Light Books 4014 Santa Monica Blvd. Silver Lake, Los Angeles, CA	Sophia Corleone, Coordinator A Different Light Books 4014 Santa Monica Blvd. Silver Lake, Los Angeles, CA	Sophia Corleone, Coordinator Plummer Park, Fiesta Hall 7377 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood, CA
January 19 Paula Gunn Allen, Aleida Rodriguez	January 18 Paula Gunn Allen	January 23 Janet Silverstein, Adele Renault	February 19 Cherrie Moraga
February 16 Barbara Wilson, Vicki McConnell	January 25 Sara Levi Calderon, Jacqueline de Angelis	February 6 Sarah Schulman, Carla Tomaso	March 5 June Jordon
February 17 Sabrina Sojourner, Lauren Wright Douglas	February 8 Minnie Bruce Pratt	March 6 Jacqueline de Angelis, Sandra Scoppettone	March 18 Nisa Donnelly, Jacqueline Woodson
March 16 Ayofemi Folayan, Margaret Sloan-Hunter	February 15 Becky Birtha, Canyon Sam	April 3 Terri de la Pena, Canyon Sam	March 19 Chrystos
April 13 Judy Grahn	February 29 Monique Wittig	April 24 Monique Wittig	March 25 Sky Lee,
April 20 Sophia Corleone, Bia Lowe	March 14 Lillian Faderman	May 15 Jane DeLynn, Jenifer Levin	April 16 Rebecca Brown
May 11 Eloise Klein Healy	March 28 Marie Cartier, Janet Silverstein, Carolyn Brigit Flynn	April 24 Lori Anderson, Eloise Klein Healy	Shani Mootoo, Makeda Silvera
May 18 Teri de la Peña, Jewell L. Gomez	April 11 Karen Sterling, Teresita Bosch	May 22 June Jordan	April 23 Eileen Myles, Ana Maria Simo
June 8 Ann Bannon	April 25 Joan Larkin, Eloise Klein Healy	June 5 Lori Anderson, Eloise Klein Healy	Donna Minkowitz, Sara Miles, Robin Podolsky
June 15 Suzanne Selby, Kris McHaddad, Terry Wilson	May 16 Dorothy Allison, Karen Marie Christa Minns	June 12 Mary Wings, Anna Livia	May 6 Paula Gunn Allen
June 23 Rachel Guido DeVries, Rose Romano	May 30 Joan Nestle	July 10 Olga Broumas, T. Begley	May 7 Angela Davis
July 12 Katherine Forrest	June 13 SDiane Bogus	July 31 Pamela Gray, Robin Podolsky	May 14 Bia Lowe, Carole Maso
July 20 Jacqueline de Angelis, Jeanne Simonoff	June 20 Terri de la Pena, Sharon Stricker	August 21 Maureen Seaton, Bia Lowe	May 13 Jane Miller
August 17 Karen Marie Christa Minns, Robin Podolsky	July 11 Katherine Forrest	September 11 Terry Wolverton, Eileen Myles	May 21 Margaret Randall
September 21 Robbi Sommers, Tee A. Corinne	July 18 Patricia Murphy, Jeanne Simonoff	September 18 Aleida Rodriguez, Michelle Cliff	June 3 Kim Vaeth, Aleida Rodriguez
September 22 Louise Moore, Toni Garcia	August 15 Rose Romano, Pamela Gray	October 16 Jewelle Gomez, Dorothy Allison	June 10 Terry Wolverton, Elizabeth Pincus
October 19 Beth Brant, Carolyn Weathers	August 22 Susanne Justice, Kris McHaddad, Angela Counts	October 23 Marilyn Hacker	June 11 Jacqueline de Angelis, Joan Larkin
November 15 SDiane Bogus, Sharon Stricker	September 12 Mafalda Barberis	November 6 Nicole Brossard	June 18 Katherine Forrest
November 16 Margaret Cruikshank, Teresita Bosch	September 19 Edouardo, Yvette Padilla, Martha Tormey	November 13 Elizabeth Nonas, Diane Salvatore	June 25 Suzanne Gardinier, Michelle T. Clinton
December 21 Elizabeth Nonas, Terry Wolverton	October 17 Janet Capone, Kyle Anne Bates	December 4 Judy Grahn	July 9 Sarah Schulman, Jenifer Levin
	October 24 Alison Bechdel	December 11 Julia Penelope	
	November 14 Margaret Randall		
	November 21 Carolyn Weathers, Nisa Donnelly		
	December 12 Lauren Wright Douglas, Vicki McConnell		
	December 19 Terry Wolverton, Elizabeth Nonas		